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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the results of an initiative taken by Paterson Public Schools (New Jersey), an urban school district with approximately 24,000 students, to restructure its Title I elementary program. The effort involves engaging Title I and regular classroom teachers in a collaborative teaching model as an alternative to the traditional "pull-out" program. Teacher attitudes and perceptions of the impact of the model were studied through focus groups and surveys. The model comprises four major components: (1) management of instruction; (2) cognitive coaching; (3) pedagogy that calls for cooperation and copresentations; and (4) assessment. Focus group interviews were conducted with 14 teachers and surveys were completed by 125 teachers in the first year and 154 in the second year. First year results indicate that teachers with less experience seemed more willing to experiment with the model, and that the more intensive the involvement of the staff in model implementation, the more favorable their perceptions of its goals. Focus group discussions pointed out the importance of teacher training for model implementation. The second year survey results show improved perceptions of the model's effectiveness in all categories evaluated and improved perceptions of the model's impact. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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Paterson Public Schools
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The 2-5 Collaborative In-Class Model:
A Restructuring of the Title I Program¹

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Since its inception, instruction through the Title I program has been largely isolated from classroom instruction. However, the Title I program has been lately experiencing a renaissance of its own by utilizing such approaches as requiring higher standards and accelerated programs for all students. Some of these changes were made in direct response to criticisms levied by educators and industry leaders that schools are turning out students who cannot solve problems or work with other people. In addition, education in general, has been the target of much criticism about its inability to stem the tide of increasing drop out rate and its ineffectiveness when dealing with rising illiteracy and declining achievement test scores. The goals of collaborative teaching are consistent with, if not inspired by, the reports that were put out by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy [1986], The Holmes Group [1986], the National Commission on Excellence in Education [1983], and the National Governors' Association [1986]. This paper reports on our efforts and experiences integrating the instructional services of the Title I and classroom teacher and posits the hypothesis that this union creates synergy in the form of a dynamic, high energy classroom situation, that promotes increased learning for students and teachers.

Overview of the Study

This paper reports on the results of an initiative taken by the Paterson Public Schools, an urban school district, to restructure its Title I program. The effort involves engaging Title I and regular classroom teachers into a collaborative teaching model as an alternative to the traditional "pull out" program. The study uses survey and focus group techniques to determine how various groups of teachers are accepting the model and how they perceive its impact on teaching and learning. Furthermore, the intent of the study is to share with others what the district has learned from this experience.

The first section of the paper provides historical antecedents to the Paterson Public Schools (PPS) and the Title I program. The second section provides the theoretical and research framework for the restructuring effort and a description of the collaborative teaching model. The third section reports on how survey and focus group techniques are used to determine the teachers' perception of the model. The questions that the PPS leadership raised are:

1. Can an urban district bring about radical restructuring of its Title I program through a comprehensive training and continuous coaching of its teachers?
2. How are teachers affected by this intervention and how they react to and make sense of the model?
3. How does this model impact on student achievement both academically and socially?

We shall attempt to answer the first two questions using data collected through survey and focus group research. The presenters will also show a video tape of actual implementation of the model in selected schools/classrooms. The third question will not

be addressed in this paper. The analysis of achievement patterns as a result of the implementation of the model will be conducted at the end of the third year of implementation of the model (1996-1997 school year).

Historical Antecedents

PPS is an urban district with approximately 24,000 students in 32 elementary schools and three high schools. Over a ten year period the district consistently failed the state requirements for accreditation. After a number of external evaluations, the New Jersey Department of Education, the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education employed existing statutes to rescind the historical practice of sharing governance and operation of local school districts (NJASA 18A). In 1989 the state took over Jersey City, the second largest school district in the state. In 1991 PPS the third largest school district, was the second district subjected to similar intrusion by the State. Both of these actions gained the attention of the nation.

Upon the recommendation of the commissioner, the State Board of Education appointed a new leader for the Paterson Public Schools². The new State District Superintendent of Schools, by statute was given the combined responsibility of a local school board as well as the superintendency of schools. The local school board was dismantled and the existing superintendent and his executive staff members were set adrift. The school community was shocked and ambivalent.

In the eyes of some observers this action was viewed as the appointment of an educational Czar with unprecedented powers to intrude upon the culture of public schools unlike any other time in the recent history of public education. However, other observers concluded that more than fifteen years of neglect and erosion in the impact of schooling upon children was more than enough reason to justify the actions that were taken.

Much was needed to be done and prior to the five year window of opportunity, which was the statutory time frame for a state-operated school district, would close. An opportune starting point was to invite faculty and staff to re-examine their professional practices. The Title I program was one of the programs that went through such examination and as a result underwent change in the mode of delivery of instruction to students. Among one of its first accomplishments was the introduction of the Title I Schoolwide Project strategy to the district³. PPS had eleven Schoolwide Project schools by the end of the 1993-1994 school year, the highest number of schools in one district in the state. *The 2-5 In-Class Collaborative* model was the other major initiative introduced into the district.

² Official Minutes of NJ State Board of Education, 1991.

³ Schoolwide Project Schools is a Title I restructuring effort that provides the stakeholders of schools develop their own programs and determine the funding patterns of Title I funds.

The Title I program was modified after the takeover as follows:

- Title I funds are directed to students in grades two through eight who are identified for Title I assistance. There are approximately 8,000 students in these grades.
- Students in kindergarten and first grade receive the same type of services as Title I students but funding for these grades is provided by the district. There are approximately 3,000 students in this group.

Review of Research Literature

Criticism has been aimed at the schools for ineffective programs that do not adequately address the escalating illiteracy rate. It is particularly challenging to an inner city school, such as PPS, in which there is a high ratio of educationally disadvantaged students. The Title I program was instituted in the mid sixties to "break the cycle of poverty". However, the problems still persist after three decades of Title I implementation.

The traditional approach to compensatory and remedial programs removed educationally disadvantaged students from the mainstream, grouped them homogeneously, and offered a less challenging curriculum and set limited achievement goals. This approach ignores a large number of research findings that show negative effect of homogeneous groupings on low-achievers (Wilkinson 1986). These so called "pull-out" programs hamper the ability of low achieving students to develop critical thinking skills by lowering learning expectations, and stigmatizing them as inferior. Because of the lack of coordination between regular and compensatory educators, Title I students end up with less instructional time, and instruction is often not linked to other learning and study areas. Title I emphasis on mastery learning may improve standardized test scores but fails to help students to work independently and develop cognitive strategies. Disadvantaged students under this system continue to be taught low level reading skills that do not transfer to higher level knowledge and literacy. Remedial mathematics programs have also been criticized for fragmenting curriculum rather than emphasizing interdependence of ideas and use of reasonable procedures to arrive at an answer (Passow 1990).

A study of fourth and fifth graders in a large city school that compared pull-out and in-class programs concluded that the educational setting played an important role in organization of lessons and in student experience. There was greater congruence between curriculum and instruction in the in-class support model. Both the pull-out and in-class support models provided a skill focused curriculum (Bean, et al 1989)

Research, in general, does not support the cost-effectiveness or the educational benefits of pull-out programs over other program structures. Several research findings point to the fact that students in pull-out situations have lower achievement gains than those remaining in the classroom (Ascher 1988). Furthermore, an evaluation of Title I services

demonstrates improved academic achievement of participants of heterogeneous groups (Ascher & Flaxmsn 1988).

Studies that report successful outcomes of pull-out situations also point to several negative factors that may dilute their effectiveness. These factors include decreased instructional time, fragmentation, stigmatizing students, segregation, and lower student achievement (Archambault 1986; Wilkinson 1986).

Theoretical Background

The *2-5 In-Class Collaborative* model is based on the belief, held by many educators, that if teachers are provided with the right kind of training and are equipped with the appropriate vehicle that allows them to think critically about teaching and learning and then "act upon those thoughts", it would result in improvement in student achievement and attitude (Sergiovanni and Starat 1993; Acheson and Gall 1992). The authors have embarked on a five year experiment to see if this assertion holds true in the case of the *In-Class Collaborative* model as the vehicle of choice..

The *2-5 In-Class Collaborative* model is built on the ideas put forth by Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston. Consequently, it is based to a great extent on the following assumptions:

1. Collaboration builds an awareness of interdependence. When people recognize the benefits of helping one another, and realize it is expected, they will work together to achieve common goals. The effort is non-threatening.
2. When people work together to achieve common goals they stimulate each other to higher levels of accomplishments. Fresh ideas are generated and tested, and the team's productivity exceeds any combined efforts of employee working individually.
3. Collaboration builds and reinforces recognition and mutual support within a team. People have an opportunity to see the effects of their efforts and the efforts of others on achievement.
4. Collaboration leads to the commitment to support and to accomplish organizational goals. People gain personal power in the form of confidence when they know others share their views and are acting in concert with them.

The model is comprised of four major components, which collectively aim to improve the delivery, impact and quality of instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics. The components and their indicators are:

Management of Instruction

- Lesson planning
- Content for instruction
- Organization and integration of curriculum

- Management of students records
- Analysis of student achievement results
- Benchmarking for teacher effectiveness
- Assessing lesson and material impact on learning
- Writing prescriptions for remediation
- Identifying resources to enhance teaching and learning

Cognitive Coaching

- Thinking clearly about teaching
- Improving effectiveness of decisions
- Strengthening collegial relationships
- Improving lesson planning and implementation
- Alleviating isolation
- Enhancing the relationship between two teachers in the classroom
- Improving the implementation of the curriculum
- Increasing the teacher's ability to communicate with students and peers
- Allowing two teachers to adopt a common vocabulary

Pedagogy

- Drawing upon the strengths and experiences of both teachers in the classroom
- Forming partnerships
- Developing agreements
- Using interactive teaching strategies
- Teaching for connectedness
- Testing new ideas
- Improving classroom management
- Reassessing the direction and strategies used during the planning and teaching of lessons
- Developing a variety of approaches to lesson taught
- Providing more attention to the individual needs of students
- Protecting contiguity of instruction
- Identifying shared values
- Engaging in co-presentation

Assessment

- Using item analysis of test results
- Generating grades for students
- Identifying learning outcomes for students
- Retaining records and documents for portfolios
- Comparing student work products with test results
- Identifying relationships between contents areas in programs
- Making qualitative judgments regarding the effectiveness of materials
- Making comparisons between lesson taught and students achievement

- Enabling longitudinal access to information on student achievement
- Enabling a review of teacher effectiveness
- Collecting and storing nontraditional forms of assessment artifacts

The Intervention: 2-5 In-Class Collaborative Model

The goals for the Department of Funded Programs are to (a) eliminate time lost in moving students to a different classroom, (b) align curriculum and instruction to the regular program, (c) eliminate fragmentation of learning and incidental learning, and (d) eliminate the stigma of belonging to a remedial class. The objectives of the model are derived from these goals. They are:

1. To improve students achievement by expecting high standards from **all** students in **all** subjects areas,
2. To help students attain grade level proficiency by shifting away from putting emphasis on the teaching of low-level skills, and
3. To assist student to be successful first in the regular class curriculum by emphasizing participation in instruction provided for children in the classroom.

This study, as previously mentioned on page 2, focuses on the staff development effort that is at the center of the model and instrumental, we hope, towards achieving the above stated objectives. The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the model and to determine areas that might need modification, improvement, or support.

Instruments

The study has three parts; a) focus group research, b) staff survey, c) documentation on videotape of actual implementation of the model in selected schools and classrooms.

The Survey

The survey instrument is based on the *Dimensions of Excellence Scales* developed by Research for Better Schools. This instrument was selected because the dimensions used in it "have been found to be related to effective school performance and, equally important are....modifiable" (Dusewicz & Byer 1988), as well as because of its successful use in numerous school districts. In addition, the survey allows the agent to describe and document the model, to assess the needs of teachers during the implementation phase and to determine future needs of the staff. The survey was administered at the end of the model's first year of implementation in May 1994, and once again in May 1995. Thus, we were able to measure changes in staff perceptions/attitudes over two consecutive years.

The survey questions are divided into eight categories that measure the staff perception of the model⁴ in the following areas:

⁴ Adapted from the Dimensions of Excellence

1. Philosophy: The model is supported by staff development activities that are perceived as having an impact on improving teaching and "maximizing student learning.
2. Purpose: The model has a clear purpose and is based on theory, research, and best practices.
3. Participation and support: The model is supported by the district in terms of time, commitment, and funds.
4. Time and place: The staff development sessions were scheduled in convenient locations and during non-instructional time.
5. Process and content: The model maintains integrity of content (knowledge/skills) but is flexible to meet the varying degrees of sophistication. The staff was provided with a variety of workshops run by experts in the field.
6. Evaluation: The model allows for systematic review of the model for modification.
7. Outcome: Activities of the model are perceived as useful and applicable for the classroom, and
8. Student achievement: The perceived impact of the model on student achievement.

The Focus Group

The focus group was comprised of fourteen teachers representing six schools and seven classrooms that were identified for having successfully implemented the model. The group provided insights into the working of the model. The focus group had dual moderators, each having a district role to play. One moderator had the task of probing responses from all members and ensuring balance in the group dynamics. The second moderator saw that the different dimensions of the model were discussed. A protocol guideline was developed for the moderators to insure that they understood their roles and refrained from using terminology or making inquiries that might bias the respondents (Greenberg, 1977; Calder 1977; Miller 1991).

Videotaped Documentation

A videotaped documentation of teaching, focus group reactions, and district leadership views on the model's goals and philosophy was prepared. A twenty minute montage of the different groups was prepared for visual documentation.

The focus group research was videotaped in its entirety and was transcribed. The salient points of the group discussion were extracted and used as the basis for staff development and support for school personnel.

Data Analysis

The survey instrument used twenty-eight (28) items to measure teacher perceptions on eight dimensions of excellence of the collaborative model. Perceptions are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly agree to 5= strongly disagree). In addition it contained several demographic items. Factor analysis was used to classify the 28 items into eight dimensions.

The results of the survey administered after first year of implementation were compared to the results in the second year of implementation. Analysis of variance was used to test for significant differences in perceptions across respondent attributes. T-test was used to determine if there were significant differences in teacher perceptions from the first to the second year.

Data sources

Year One

The survey was mailed to 387 Paterson staff members who took part in the "Month of Immersion" training in preparation for the implementation of the model. Even though training was system-wide, implementation was left to the discretion of the individual teacher. Of the 387 participants, 125 teachers (32%) responded to our survey. The respondents consist of Title I teachers, classroom teachers, teacher assistants, and principals. Thirty percent (30%) were classroom teachers and fifty four percent (54%) were Title I teachers. Female respondents in this group was 96% and male respondents were 5. This was expected since female teachers in Paterson outnumber male teachers. Also note that 24% of the respondents were African American and 8% were Latino⁵.

Year Two

The survey was mailed to 280 members of the first year cohorts who participated in the second year of training. Responses were received from 154 (55%). The ratios of female and white staff remain, approximately, the same as in the first year study. The respondents included 12% African American and 8% Latino. Also, 32% of respondents were classroom teachers and 62% were Title I teachers⁶. Unlike the first survey, however, the second survey identified staff by their level of training in Dr. McCarthy's 4MAT learning system (Fundamentals, Intermediate, Trainer). Also staff were provided with space for comments after each question.

Results

Results of the first year:

Survey results

1. Teachers with less than three years experience seem to be more willing to experiment with the model (mean 3.3 compared to mean 2.4),
2. The more intensive the involvement of the staff in the implementation of the model (number of hours per week) the more favorable is their perception of its goals (mean 1.8 compared to mean 2.1),
3. Respondents are generally uncertain about the extent of the model's impact on student achievement,

⁵ See Table 1 for detailed breakdown of demographic data.

⁶ See Table 2 for detailed breakdown of demographic data.

4. There seems to be no relationship between the highest educational degree earned and attitude towards the model,
5. A small proportion (4%) of the staff are resentful and do not use the model in their classroom,
6. The respondents rate the leadership's responsibilities for the project as exemplary and attribute to them the success of the program (60%),
7. There were no significant perceptual differences across staff age, ethnicity, gender, and degrees attained.

Focus group results

1. The majority of group members indicated that the "Month of Immersion" training was very valuable in understanding the model (11 out of 14),
2. The majority of group members observed a higher level of motivation and involvement in academic and social activities for both Title I and regular students (7 out 14)
3. The majority of group members credited their training in 4MAT learning system as a factor in facilitating teacher-teacher and teacher-student relationships in the implementation of the model (8 out 14),
4. Members of the group who were skeptical about the success of the program indicated the lack of adequate preparation time as a factor in understanding and developing appreciation of the model (3 out 14),
5. Teachers who were not trained in the model but worked with teachers who were trained were able to implement the model effectively (2 out of 2), and
6. The entire group reported that planning and preparation time was not adequate and that additional time would enhance the model (14 out of 14).

Results of the second year:

There was a significant improvement in the perception of the model's effectiveness in all eight categories (see Table-4). The t-values ranged from 12.22 to 33.04. Some of these results need to be highlighted:

1. Perceptions in the category "Process and content" improved the most with the mean of the respondents increasing from 1.98 to 4.11. This indicates that the model has integrity of content and that the staff development activities met their intended needs.
2. Perceptions of the district's support for the Model in terms of time, commitment, and funds improved. The mean of this category increased from 2.08 to 3.90.
3. Improved perceptions that the Model not only meets the needs of the district and the staff but that its staff development activities are coordinated with other learning activities such as 4MAT learning styles and multiple intelligence training. The mean increased from 2.10 to 3.97.
4. Significant improvements in the staff's perception of the impact of the model on teaching and student learning as measured through "outcome" and "student

achievement" categories. The mean of these categories increased from 2.32 to 3.94 and 2.49 to 3.77 respectively.

5. There were no significant perceptual differences across staff age, ethnicity, gender, years of experience, degrees attained, and 4MAT training.

Staff Comments

Below is a list of the comments that were written in response to the questions in the eight categories.

Philosophy: [Simple, direct, and applicable], [I believe the model is applicable to all levels], ["if" the model was implemented as "modeled", however it cannot occur as long as AP teachers are "spread too thin" to be effective as per model. Need more AP teachers.]

Purpose: [It was an excellent workshop and ideas can be easily implemented], [I welcomed the opportunity to update and expand my professional growth].

Participation and support: [Maggie has done a marvelous Job.], [More support from the supervisors should be expected],[The best staff development of the year!].

Time and Place: No comments were made in this category.

Process and content: [Very current research], [I need to have the training presented at a slower pace and would have retained much more. However, I have the book to do the follow-up study], [yes, staff were students as well as teachers], [excellent but crammed, give more time please!], [Need more training].

Evaluation: [Very much so- workshop needs to be extended and constantly updated],[I am not certain it was ever evaluated].

Outcome: [We need more follow up and sharing activities with other participants to bond and gain confidence in the model], [We had hoped for a group to come together at our school but this didn't happen, mainly due to time and stress], [We need group involvement and sharing].

Student Achievement: [Instruction is enhanced and students have achieved greater success in their academic endeavors], [Small group instruction achieved better results], [Strategies presented work with at risk students, gifted and talented students, slow learners, etc. Excellent!]

Appendix

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